

BEETHOVEN.

THE SONATA-SOVEREIGN.

Missives of the Great Musician, Etc.

Messrs. Hurd & Houghton—peers of our oldest houses in the value and extent of their belle-lettres publications—have just issued an exceedingly valuable collection of the letters of Ludwig von Beethoven. The present collection, translated from the German, by Grace Wallace, embraces the material of both German collections, to wit—the collection of Dr. Ludwig Nobl, which forms the first part of Lady Wallace's work, and that of Dr. Ludwig Ritter, which has been added to the book and within it incorporated. The edition of these letters, prepared by Lady Wallace, is accompanied with a portrait of Beethoven, engraved on steel, from an original painting in the possession of Dr. T. G. von Karajan, which is valuable, because new to the public, and because accounted by virtuosos to be the very best likeness of Beethoven extant. The translation is artistically done, exhibiting few Teutonisms and fewer misapprehensions of the sense of the original text.

Whatever may have been the faults of Beethoven—and they were many—like all men of genius, his nature was one of heroic and almost prophetic depth, and his mind one of profound creative fecundity. There was about him a severity of antique dignity, the ethical sentiment forming the main element of that which gave his mind its peculiar bent; and consequently his letters exhibit, in dress often home-spun and unmetaphoric, his profound intuition of the true and of the good, as well as of the beautiful, and are full of hits at the follies and meannesses of his age. There is an undercurrent of deep aesthetic and ethical energy pervading these letters—fragmentary in form as they are—which binds them together in one indivisible unity. There is that proud haughtiness of self-consciousness—we use the word in its German sense—which grasps the soul with strange magnetism. Beethoven was the Milton of musical creation; and between his creations and those of Milton we may (or might, had we space allotted) work out wonderful analogical resemblances.

Meantime, however, we have but space for examples of these letters, by way of giving a taste of their quality and of the singular weirdness of inner soul-energy that there is within them.

Motives of the Art-Life.

The following excerpt is from Beethoven's letter to the directors of the Court Theatre, dated at Vienna, December, 1807:—

TO THE DIRECTORS OF THE COURT THEATRE. VIENNA, December, 1807.—The undersigned has cause to flatter himself that, during the period of his stay at Vienna, he has gained some favor and approval from the higher nobility, as well as from the public at large, his works having met with an honorable reception both in this and other countries. Nevertheless, he has had difficulties of every kind to contend against, and has not been so fortunate as to acquire a position that would enable him to live solely for art, and to develop his talents to a still higher degree of perfection, which ought to be the aim of every artist, thus ensuring future independence instead of mere casual profits.

The mere wish to gain a livelihood has never been the leading class that has hitherto guided the undersigned on his path. His great aim has been the interest of art and the ennobling of taste, while his genius, soaring to a higher ideal and greater perfection, frequently compelled him to sacrifice his talents and profits to the Muse. Still, works of this kind won for him a reputation—his hands, securing him the most favorable reception in various places of distinction, and a position befitting his talents and acquirements.

Proposals to the Court Theatre.

The following excerpt, from the same letter, illustrates the compensations awarded in his day to operatic creations:—

1. The undersigned undertakes and pledges himself to compose, each year, at least one grand opera, to be selected by the directors and himself; in return for this he demands a fixed salary of two thousand four hundred florins a year, and also a free benefit on the third performance of each such opera.

2. He also agrees to supply the directors annually with a little opera or a divertimento, with choruses or occasional music of the kind, as may be required, gratis; he feels confident that, on the other hand, the directors will not refuse, in return for these various labors, to grant him a benefit concert, at all events, once a year, in one of the theatres. Surely, the above conditions cannot be thought exorbitant or unreasonable when the expenditure of time and energy entailed by the production of an opera is taken into account, as it entirely excludes the possibility of all other mental exertion; in other places, too, the author and his family have a share in the profits of every individual performance, so that even one successful work at once insures the future fortunes of the composer. It must also be considered how prejudicial the present rate of exchange is to artists here, and likewise the high price of the necessities of life, while a residence in foreign countries is open to them.

Attempts at Humor.

Letters eighty-one and eighty-two, both addressed to Zmeskall, and dated respectively February 2, 1812, and February 8, 1812, illustrate the peculiar humor of the great composer, and are as full as any of his Germanism for quotation:—

TO ZMESKALL. FEBRUARY 2, 1812.—By no means extraordinary, but very ordinary mender of pens! whose talent has failed on this occasion (for those I send require to be fresh mended), when do you intend at last to cast off your fetters?—when? You never for a moment think of me; accused to me life amid this Austrian barbarism. I shall go now chiefly to the Swan, as in other taverns I cannot defend myself against intrusion. Farewell! that is, fare as well as I wish you to do without your friend, BEETHOVEN. Most wonderful of men! We beg that your servant will engage a person to sit up my apartment; as he is acquainted with the lodgings, he can fix the proper price at once. Do this soon, you Carnival scamp!!!!!!

The enclosed note is at least a week old:—

TO ZMESKALL. FEBRUARY 8, 1812.—Most extraordinary and first and foremost man of the pendulum in the world, and without a lever, how!

I am much indebted to you for having imparted to me some share of your motive power. I wish to express my gratitude in person, and, therefore, invite you this morning to come to the Swan—and, in the name of which itself shows that it is a fitting place when such a subject is in question. Yours ever, BEETHOVEN. The London Philharmonic. In a letter, addressed to F. Ries, London, and dated at Vienna, July 9, 1817, he remits the conditions under which he promises to compose a couple of grand symphonies for the London Philharmonic Society:—

TO F. RIES, LONDON. VIENNA, July 9, 1817.—My Dear Friend:—The proposals in your esteemed letter of the month of June are very flattering, and my reply will show you how much I value them. Were it not for my unhappy infirmities, which entail both attendance and expense, particularly on a journey to a

foreign country, I would unconditionally accept of the terms of the Philharmonic Society, directing myself in my position, and consider how in my more obstacles I have to contend with than any other artist, and then judge whether my demands (which I now annex) are unreasonable. I beg you will convey my conditions to the directors of the above society, namely:—

- 1. I shall be in London early in January.
2. The two grand new symphonies shall be ready by that time; to become the exclusive property of the Society.
3. The Society to give me, in return, three hundred guineas, and one hundred for my travelling expenses, which will, however, amount to much more, as I am obliged to bring a companion with me.
4. As I am now beginning to work at these grand symphonies for the Society, I shall expect that (on receiving my consent) they will remit me here, at the sum of one hundred guineas, to enable me to make my arrangements, and make my other preparations at once for the journey.
5. The conditions as to my non-appearance in any of the public performances are not directing, and the preference always to be given to the Society on the offer of equal terms by them, are accepted by me; indeed, they would, at all events, have been dictated by my own sense of honor.
6. I shall expect the aid of the Society in arranging one or more benefit concerts in my behalf, as the case may be. The very friendly feelings of some of the directors in your favorable letter, and the kind recollection of my works by all the artists, is a sufficient guarantee on this point, and will be a still further inducement to me to endeavor not to disappoint their expectations.
7. I request that I may receive the assent to and confirmation of these terms, signed by three directors, in the name of the Society. You may easily imagine how much I rejoice at the thoughts of becoming acquainted with the worthy Sir George Smart (music director), and seeing you and Mr. Neate again; would that I could fly to you myself, instead of this letter! Your sincere well-wisher and friend, LUDWIG VON BEETHOVEN.

Home Difficulties. We conclude our excerpts from these curiosities with a whimsical letter of the composer to his nephew-son, which is without date:—

TO HIS NEPHEW.

My Dear Son:—Send this letter at once to my nephew-son, and tell something yourself. It is impossible to permit this to continue any longer; no soup to-day, no beef, no eggs, and at last broiled meat from the inn!

When Holz was with me lately, there was really almost nothing to eat at supper; and such is the woman's hold and insolent behavior, that I have told her to-day I will not suffer her to remain beyond the end of the month. No more to-day. All that is necessary about the magistrats is for me to write a note authorizing you to draw the money; but it would be as well were you to take the opportunity of asking what you are to do about converting the bank shares into a share in Rothschild's loan. I shall say nothing further, except that I always look on you as my dear son, and one who deserves to be so. Like as I require what nourishes the body, as you know, still the present state of things is really too bad, besides being every moment in danger of being poisoned. Farewell! Be careful, my dear son, of your health in this heat; I trust you will continue well. Show all that may enervate or diminish your youthful energies. Farewell! A pleasant talk together would be far better than all this writing. Ever your loving and attached father, who fondly presses you to his heart. LUDWIG VON BEETHOVEN.

MASSACHUSETTS.

The Case of John Moran, the Sentenced Murderer—The Application for Commutation of Sentence Denied—The Escape of Shilborn from Prison. Boston, December 4.—This morning, the final hearing in the case of John Moran, sentenced to be hung for the murder of Mary Ellen Kearney, in the doorway of a house in Roxbury, on the evening of March 19, took place. The Comptroller on Pardons decided adversely to the application of commutation of sentence, and Friday, the 25th of January next, was fixed upon as the day for his execution. The application was based on the ground that Moran was laboring under a temporary attack of insanity at the time he committed the act.

The case of Raudall vs. Brigham was brought up in the United States Circuit Court this morning, before Judge Lowell. This was a suit brought by Mr. Randall against Judge Brigham for striking his name from the roll of members of the Suffolk bar. Mr. Randall stated that he this morning received a letter and a telegraphic dispatch from James T. Brady, Esq., of New York, whom Mr. Randall had engaged for his counsel, saying that, on account of the pressure of other business, which could not be postponed, he would not be able to appear to-day, and should be obliged to decline attending the case. The case was accordingly postponed, and will be tried before a jury at the next session of the Court.

Mark Shilborn, the noted burglar, who escaped from the Concord (N. H.) State Prison yesterday, was convicted a year ago of the robbery of the Walpole (N. H.) Bank, and sentenced for ten years. He escaped soon afterwards, was re-arrested, and taken direct to Concord. His escape on Monday was with the aid of an accomplice, who had bored five auger holes low down in the great gate. The prisoners were going in procession from their workshop to their cells, across the yard, when Shilborn made a sudden dash to the gate, tore off a portion of the lower plank, which broke where the five auger holes had been made, sprang through the opening, and climbed over a wooden fence.

A bullet fired in the yard missed him. Outside the woodshed there was an accomplice waiting with a carriage. Shilborn jumped to, tore off his prison jacket, wrapped a coat around him, and dropped down under cover of the bullet-holes, his comrade meanwhile driving the horse down State street. They were out of sight before the officers could pursue. A reward of \$1000 has been offered for his capture. A letter has been found in a false bottom of his workshop drawer, saying that the plan of the escape was all right, and the signal would be looked for on Monday. To carry on the correspondence it is supposed some one gained access nightly to the workshop by scaling the walls. A reward is offered for his arrest.

There was a steady demand for Government securities to-day. The supply of paper currency was in excess of the demand for commercial and other purposes. It is probable that General Grant will attend the meeting of the veterans of the late war at Concord, N. H., on New Year's day. The Committee of the City Council upon the selection of a suitable design for a monument to commemorate the heroic deeds of our soldiers, has resolved to break ground for its erection on the 1st of January next, when the cornerstone will be laid on the site of the flag-staff on the hill near the frog pond. The programme of the ceremonies has not yet been agreed upon, but it is anticipated that there will be an immense military and civic parade, and an address. The monument is to cost \$100,000, and when completed will be one of the handsomest specimens of architecture in the country.

Horse-Meat Butcher-Shops—A late Paris letter states that two of these establishments are situated in this city, but the horses of one of these slaughter-houses are not served for the table; they are animals spoiled by disease, and are merchandise only as far as hoofs, hide, teeth, hair, and bones are concerned. The universal testimony as to horse-meat concurs with that which many army officers and soldiers have given—that it is very like beef, only that it is coarser grained and of darker color. It is a curious fact that white and grey horses are more frequently diseased than any others, their lungs being not rarely a mass of corruption, thus vitiating the old adage, 'As good as a white horse.' The horses are killed by a blow on the head, or by being pierced at the heart.

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